

June 11, 2009

Mr. Ford called the workshop meeting of the Union Township Planning Board/Board of Adjustment to order at 7:00 p.m. The Sunshine Statement was read.

Members Present: Mr. Walchuk, Mr. Taibi, Mr. Badenhause, Mrs. Corcoran,
Mr. Ryland, Mr. Nace, Mr. Ford, Mr. Kirkpatrick

Members Absent: Mrs. Dziubek, Mr. Bischoff

Others Present: Atty. Mark Anderson, Carl Hintz, Kevin Smith, Clay Emerson, Anthony Rana, Atty. Scott Carlson, Catherine Adkins, James Woods, John McDonough, Joseph Staigar, Alan Steere

Pilot Travel Centers LLC: Block 11, Lot 24.03, 68 Route 173 West: Public Hearing

Amended Site Plan: Atty. Scott Carlson was present on behalf of applicant. Pilot witnesses Catherine Adkins, James Woods, John McDonough, Joseph Staigar and Alan Steere were sworn by Atty. Anderson. Mr. Ford asked that each witness state their name and credentials prior to individual testimony. Catherine Adkins said she is Site Project Manager for Pilot. Ms. Adkins stated that at a site visitation, it was noted that there was not enough distance between the Cat Scale and the Diesel Islands. She explained the changes in the Amended Plan. The Scale will be relocated, the big island will be removed and the repair shop will be removed. The proposal will allow sufficient room for stacking as well as access to all islands. The plan has two-way circulation and is typical of most Pilot sites.

Atty. Carlson asked Jim Woods to come forward. Mr. Woods is a licensed Engineer in the State of New Jersey. His credentials were accepted by the Board. Mr. Woods prepared the Plans before the Board. He displayed two Exhibits. The first Exhibit, marked A-1, showed the proposed Plan. The second Exhibit, marked A-2, was the previously approved Plan. Mr. Woods explained the differences in the two plans. There will be slightly less impervious surface coverage. Engineer Smith had submitted a letter dated June 8, 2009. Atty. Carlson asked that letter be marked Exhibit A-3. Mr. Woods displayed Drawing SS-2 showing the placement of the seventeen no-idling signs. The Drawing was marked Exhibit A-4.

Mr. Woods described lighting at the site. Engineer Smith said the proposed lighting plan is an improvement over that which had been approved. Mr. Woods continued. He addressed field changes. Mr. Woods believes the additional inlet will not be necessary because of proposed regrading. He said that the extension of the sidewalk will be added to the revised plan. Mr. Smith said the Board requested that consideration be given to a decorative sidewalk. Atty. Carlson felt Pilot would be amenable. Mr. Woods addressed storm water management. He said Pilot agrees to put in a snout to upgrade the sand filter.

Mr. Kirkpatrick asked about the field change request to relocate the curb line or fence to provide a fifteen-foot separation between the curb line and fence. Mr. Woods said that is not a part of the proposed plan. Mr. Walchuk asked the closest distance between the curb line and the fence. Mr. Woods said it is about three to five feet. Mr. Kirkpatrick asked the distance between the rear tire or a trailer and a bumper. Mr. Woods said it is greater than three feet. He believes a driver should not have to back all the way to the curb. Mr. Hintz noted the previous plan showed a sidewalk that allows pedestrians to walk from the eastern and northern area to the restaurant. Mr. Smith said he believes that is obscured by a tree. Mr. Hintz suggested that a sidewalk go from the south side of the building to the fueling islands. Mr. Woods agreed. Mrs. Corcoran had a question about lighting. She understood the previous plan had better lighting for safety purposes. Mr. Woods responded. He said applicant would be willing to make changes. However, Mr. Woods stated he believed that applicant is in compliance with the Ordinance.

Mr. Ford asked if a traffic expert would be testifying. Atty. Carlson replied in the affirmative. Mr. Emerson, representing Princeton Hydro, said proposed changes to storm water offer a slight improvement. He thought the addition of the snout was a good idea. It might facilitate maintenance. Mr. Smith explained how the snout would function. Mr. Emerson said the snout would not be visible.

Atty. Carlson asked that the full set of plans be marked. They were marked Exhibit A-5.

Mr. Kirkpatrick asked for questions from Board members. Mr. Walchuk had a question about who proposed the idea of protecting the fence from damage by trucks. He was told it came from Pilot. Atty. Carlson represented to the Board that applicant would work with Engineer Smith regarding the location of the fence. It will be as far from the curb as feasible. Mr. Walchuk asked why the curb needed to be so close to the fence line. It was determined that the traffic engineer could answer that question better.

Atty. Carlson asked Planner John McDonough to come forward. Mr. McDonough cited his credentials. They were acceptable to the Board. Mr. McDonough presented an Exhibit stating Variances, dated June 11, 2009. It was marked A-6. Mr. McDonough said he is familiar with the site, having made numerous visits. He said none of the variances were being changed or worsened by the present application. Mr. McDonough said impervious coverage has been reduced to 47.3 percent from 48.4 percent. The auto repair facility is being removed, reducing the number of employees and parking spaces required. Mr. McDonough recited the variances set forth on A-6. He struck the lighting variances, since it was determined in October, 2008 that they were not necessary. Signage remains virtually unchanged. The exception would be the location of the Cat scale sign.

Mr. Hintz said the impervious coverage would need to be modified, since sidewalks are being added. Atty. Carlson said the appropriate calculation would be shown on an approved plan. Mrs. Corcoran had questions about lighting and the repair shop.

Mr. McDonough said no relief is sought for lighting. Referencing Mrs. Corcoran's concerns about negatives associated with removal of the repair shop, Mr. McDonough did not foresee substantial negatives. He said there are alternatives. Mrs. Corcoran wanted additional information. . Atty. Carlson said testimony would be provided on repair shop locations.

Mr. Kirkpatrick asked that the record reflect that he had to leave. (8:00 p.m.)

Atty. Carlson asked Ms. Adkins to come forward. She said most truck drivers have their own service companies they call if they breakdown. Pilot has garages at some of their sites, but they are strictly a function of their development.

Atty. Carlson asked Traffic Engineer Joseph Staigar to come forward. Mr. Staigar stated his credentials. He described the problem with the approved plan. Mr. Staigar had prepared an Exhibit, entitled "A Truck Circulation Plan, Previously Approved Plan", dated 5/19/09. The Exhibit was marked A-7. It denoted maximum stacking. Mr. Staigar explained the problem with stacking and said the elimination of the island and moving the scale would allow a more orderly fashion to stacked trucks. Mr. Staigar displayed an Exhibit entitled "Truck Circulation Plan, the Proposed Plan". It was marked A-8, dated June 11, 2009. A-8 depicted showed trucks fueling up and other trucks stacking behind them. Mr. Staigar said other vehicles would be able to circulate around the trucks. Mr. Staigar said the proposed plan would operate more efficiently and safely than the approved plan. Atty. Carlson said he had no further question of the witness.

Mr. Ford asked for questions from the Board. Mr. Taibi expressed his delight that the pit was gone. However, he had concerns about what might have been overlooked in addition to the on-site circulation. Mr. Ford asked that the discussion be restricted to on-site circulation. Mr. Ford had a concern about the inability of a trucker to execute fueling and scale use without having to leave the site and come back. Mr. Staigar explained. He said that would only happen if there were 24 trucks. Mr. Ford commented that with the proposed plan, trucks would not be able to get to most of the parking spaces. Mr. Staigar agreed. He said the purpose of the depiction was to show the number of trucks that could be stacked under the two plans. It was not meant to show what would happen every minute of the day.

Mr. Taibi asked Mr. Staigar if the proposed plan would allow a truck to go between the Building and the truck scale. Mr. Staigar said "Yes". He also told Mr. Taibi that Pilot looked at all movements throughout the site. Mr. Taibi asked what would happen if a bus was fueling up. Mr. Staigar said the outside turning radius of a bus is not larger than an articulated truck, therefore, he did not see a problem with a bus.

Mr. Staigar displayed an Exhibit that was entitled "Truck U-Turn". The Exhibit was marked A-9.

Mr. Walchuk asked Mr. Staigar if he had looked at the issue of parked vehicles being unable to leave the site because of trucks fueling and blocking the way. Mr. Staigar said the proposed plan provides better circulation. He acknowledged the site was not picture perfect. Mr. Walchuk expressed a concern similar to Mr. Taibi's about what might have been overlooked. Mr. Staigar emphasized that Pilot was improving the ability to service trucks and keep the site opened for free movement.

Atty. Carlson asked Mr. Staigar to address Board concerns regarding the curb and fencing along the east side of the property. Mr. Staigar said there should be ten feet between the fence and the curb line. Pilot will work to achieve that distance. Mrs. Corcoran had a question about traffic flowing in both directions and trucks either backing in parking spaces or pulling in front. Mrs. Corcoran saw that as a disaster. The approved plan had a controlled flow of traffic. Mr. Staigar said two-way traffic is a standard at most truck stops. He also said that two trucks would be able to pass each other. Mr. Staigar said a truck is 8-1/2 feet wide and the aisle is almost fifty feet. He indicated that at times a truck might have to stop for an oncoming vehicle. Mr. Hintz thought it might be easier to keep the older plan and remove the truck repair shop. Mr. Staigar said there would still be a problem with stacking. Mr. Ford offered some ideas to alleviate the problem.

Mr. Staigar presented another Exhibit which was entitled Plan with scale removed. It was marked A-10. Mr. Staigar gave an overview of the Exhibit. Mrs. Corcoran asked why the original design was okay before and now it wasn't. Mr. Staigar said Pilot came up with a better idea. He emphasized that stacking and congestion are enemies of operation at the site. Mr. Staigar said he likes the one way flow better, however, he feels that two-way traffic has more benefits. Mrs. Corcoran felt one plan accommodated parking and the other accommodated fueling. She said taking the scale away would help with fueling and maintain a really good parking pattern. Mr. Staigar said accommodating fueling is the number one issue. It would allow two or three more spaces for stacking. Mrs. Corcoran said it would maintain a nice clean flow for parking and resting. Mr. Staigar said that would not necessarily be so.

Mr. Taibi asked how many trucks can be stacked at the present. Mr. Staigar said not many. He told Mr. Taibi he will get that number. Mr. Taibi thought Mrs. Corcoran's comment should be considered. Mr. Ryland said at night, trucks are parked wherever there is a spot, legal or illegal. Mr. Taibi said the semis park in the gas fueling section. Mr. Staigar said the ability to get trucks out of the site is better with the proposed plan. He also said the bypass lane will alleviate queuing. Mr. Taibi asked how issues were overlooked. Mr. Staigar said the plan worked on paper. They saw the limitations when they were in the field. Mr. Walchuk mentioned eliminating the scale in its proposed location and narrowing the approved center island. He said that might help circulation. Mr. Walchuk asked about the water quality swale. Mr. Staigar indicated there wouldn't be a swale anymore. It would be a curbed island.

Mr. Walchuk said he didn't mean to remove the island. Mr. Staigar said they could make it thinner or perhaps make it a grass island. Mr. Walchuk said, perhaps, the area where the repair shop was located could become a green area. Mr. Walchuk emphasized his concern that Pilot look at every alternative. Mr. Staigar indicated that Pilot had revisited the plan in anticipation of Board members' questions. He emphasized that congestion at the site would not help anybody. Mr. Staigar believes the proposed plan virtually eliminates any potential of stacking out onto Route 173. Mr. Taibi asked Mr. Staigar if eight parking spaces could be either moved or eliminated to ease the problem with stacking. Mr. Ford said impervious coverage would be increased if the eight spaces were moved.

There was further discussion about the island. Mr. Ford said moving the scale and sliding the island back would result in a gain of fifty-five feet. Atty. Carlson asked if Ms. Adkins could address the issue. Ms. Adkins said it was important to keep the area as open as possible in order that trucks circulate freely. Mr. Ford asked that the distance from the pump to the existing island be revisited. It was determined there was a distance of 107 feet from the diesel fueling island to the scale. Mr. Ford explained how applicant could achieve a distance of 162 feet. That would be more than the standard 160 feet. Ms. Adkins voiced a concern about losing parking spaces. Mr. Taibi asked Ms. Adkins if Pilot charged for parking. She said Pilot does not charge, however, they lose customers if there is inadequate parking. Mr. Taibi said previous testimony focused on fueling and now parking is a concern. He also said he thought there were concerns elsewhere that the Board did not know yet. Ms. Adkins asked about the concerns. Mr. Taibi said he would put those concerns on the table, if he knew. He added that until the facility is in operation the Board wouldn't know.

Ms. Adkins emphasized that Pilot wants the site to function effectively and that parking is important. She asked what the issue was with the proposed plan. Mrs. Corcoran said her issue was that Pilot was accommodating fueling and not parking. She said there was a lot more room for people parking and maneuvering around with the old site plan.

Mrs. Corcoran asked Ms. Adkins if Pilot charges for the truck scale. Ms. Adkins said Pilot has an agreement with Caterpillar. She does not know how much Caterpillar makes. Mrs. Corcoran said the scale could be removed, giving more stacking space. The original island and site plan could be maintained and the flow of traffic would be better. Mr. Staigar said removing the scale is a drop in the bucket. Mr. Walchuk said the scale could be moved. He said if Pilot wants to keep the eight parking spots, he would be inclined not to vote for the proposal. Mr. Walchuk said it sounds like the proposal is to push more trucks through the fueling station and maximize revenue. He does not see that as necessarily in the interest of Union Township. Mr. Staigar said reducing congestion benefits everyone. Ms. Adkins stressed maximizing efficiency of the site. Mr. Walchuk questioned what was meant by efficiency. Mr. Staigar responded. He indicated the importance of trucks being able to fully utilize fueling positions. Mr. Walchuk said he keeps hearing that Pilot isn't considering alternatives.

Mr. Staigar indicated the proposed scenario is the ideal efficiency. He provided testimony on distances needed for trucks to move around the site in an efficient manner. Mr. Walchuk mentioned the elimination of the scale and some reasonable encroachment and the distance needed for movement of trucks. Mr. Staigar said the scale, island and eight parking spaces would have to be eliminated.

Ms. Adkins mentioned a problem with parking. She said Pilot would be losing nineteen spaces due to angling. Mr. Taibi asked what the horizontal parallel line to the fueling station represented. Ms. Adkins said it was the pull forward line. It allows a trucker to wash a windshield, i.e., without holding another trucker from fueling up. Mr. Taibi mentioned the no parking and loading zone on the plan. Mr. Staigar and Ms. Adkins emphasized there will be no parking or loading in the area. Messrs. Ford and Taibi questioned Ms. Adkins on the loss of nineteen spaces. Ms. Adkins apologized for having twisted the plans. Mr. Taibi referenced losing eight spaces. He felt there should be three or four spaces for parking. Mr. Ford said that would increase impervious coverage.

Mr. Ford asked for further questions from the Board. Atty. Anderson had questions. Mr. Anderson asked Mr. Staigar to summarize differences between Exhibits A-7 and A-8. Mr. Anderson said A-8 shows more stacking spaces and there is a conflict with the majority of parking spaces on the northern part of the site. Mr. Staigar said that is because more stacked spaces are shown. Mr. Anderson continued. He said A-7 does not show a conflict with any parking spaces on the northern side. Atty. Anderson asked if it wouldn't be fair to say that A-7 provides less stacking, but less conflict of parking. Atty. Anderson and Mr. Staigar briefly discussed issues with the proposal. Ms. Adkins voiced a concern about the loss of spaces.

Mr. Ford said the hour was getting late. He mentioned discussion of possible options. Atty. Carlson asked for a five-minute recess. Mr. Ford asked for further input from Board Professionals. There being none, Mr. Ford said there would be a five-minute adjournment. (9:45 p.m.) The Hearing reconvened at 9:55 p.m. Atty. Carlson said applicant heard Board suggestions about maintaining a one-way flow of traffic while providing maximum stacking capability on site. Mr. Carlson said applicant would like to explore Board proposals. He noted that Pilot has a time issue since construction is ongoing at the site. Atty. Carlson asked the Board to consider a special meeting. Mr. Ford asked Board members if they were willing to consider a special meeting on June 18, 2009. Atty. Anderson said no further notice would be required as long as it was placed on the record. Mr. Taibi made a motion to schedule that meeting. It was seconded by Mrs. Corcoran.

Vote: Ayes: Mr. Taibi, Mrs. Corcoran, Mr. Walchuk, Mr. Badenhause, Mr. Ryland
Mr. Nace, Mr. Ford

Atty. Carlson asked when additional material should be provided to the Board. He was told information should be submitted by Monday afternoon. Atty. Anderson said he did not know the time the Board had to make a decision on the application. Atty. Carlson said, if necessary, applicant would extend the time until the June 18, 2009 meeting. Atty. Anderson said he had reviewed notice documents and they appeared to be fine. He had not seen the green cards.

Comments from the Public: None

Mr. Ford said that Revisions to the Ordinance Fee Schedule was on the agenda. Mr. Walchuk made a motion to reschedule that matter until the June 25, 2009 meeting. Mr. Badenhause seconded the motion.
Vote: All Ayes, No Nays, Motion Carried

Motion to Adjourn: Mr. Walchuk made the motion. It was seconded by Mrs. Corcoran. (10:00 p.m.)
Vote: All Ayes, No Nays, Motion Carried

Grace A. Kocher, Secretary